Mr. Mead began his talk by discussing the central feature of international relations today: the “secret plan to rule the world.” This “plan” which involves not just military but also economic and other aspects of society was started 400 years ago by the Dutch. About 1700 the British took over the system and improved on it for the next two centuries. Then the US took over when the British were devastated by World Wars I and II. The US is still trying to make the system work. Consider the Dutch version as Operating System 1.0, the British version as 2.0, and the US version as about 3.3 today.

This world system is a major actor in international relations but it is not usually considered as such a factor
- More likely to hear about the rise and fall of Europe over the last 400 years
- Europeans came rushing out after the Renaissance to build empires
- Then they were forced to lose their colonies and the US largely took over

The trade/finance/political system became stronger and more pronounced with each century
- It has not stopped developing even after 2000
- China is not spending much time fighting the other great powers but it does think about them and what they want in trade relations
- Long history but it is not over

Discussion will center on the Dutch / UK / US efforts to “rule the world”

**First Key Point: Must have and open / dynamic society to “rule the world”**
- Not a society ruled by customs alone
- People are considered individuals; roles not assigned at birth by society ranking
- Economically capable of trying new things
- Dutch started this off in the 17th century
  - Universities without any controlling religious body
  - Allowed many new inventions to happen – microscopes, etc.
  - People like Descartes came from elsewhere to enjoy the freedoms available
  - Religious groups everywhere else were fighting each other
    - In Holland would even tolerate Jews
• Did not love them but permitted them to participate in society to benefit of all sides
• A New Amsterdam governor wanted to ban Jews but was told it was a matter of business to allow them there
  ▪ Tolerance, not love, is essential for an open society
  ▪ Open societies open new doors so Dutch had
    • First stock market
    • First economic “bubble” over tulips
      o Not buying just a tulip bulb but all those that would come after
      o Justified huge prices that were paid
    • Follow on was national banks which the British would create and perfect to maintain national economic stability
      ▪ Open Dutch society also provided new goods that it could sell to the world

Second Key Point: Must take the show on the road to “rule the world”
• Dutch began the tradition of the Grand Tour – sending young men out to learn about the world
  ▪ Also were able to take new products to others around the world
  ▪ Often they knew better than the locals what the locals needed
• Holland or the “United Provinces” (UP), while only about the size of Maryland, and yet had 10,000 merchant ships
  ▪ Soon were in control of trading in Southeast Asia, Japan, Brazil, and New Amsterdam (New York)
  ▪ They were a very big player in world commerce and that made them rich

Third Key Point: Use wealth / knowledge of world to maintain a balance of power
• Not really rivals when power is well balanced
• Dutch balanced against whichever other power was then ascending
• Eventually the Brits took over the task from the Dutch; then the US took it over from the UK
  ▪ Throughout history each would balance against the other powers of the time
• All became maritime powers and went on to global interests, not local ones
  ▪ Austria and Prussia battled over little Silesia to the exhaustion of both
  ▪ At the same time the British were consolidating their global system
• While others engaged in regional disputes, the big three UP/UK/US took on world issues
  ▪ The huge amounts of money each made in world trade would be used to support their militaries and their allies
  ▪ Money would help them get a favorable geo-political position

Fourth Key Point: Once in control of the global system, offer others the opportunity to be part of it
• UK passed free trade laws to allow others to be involved in the mid-1800s
  ▪ Concept was that others would be less likely to quarrel with them if they were involved in trading
  ▪ Allow others to get rich by participating in the system
• Helping others get rich makes friends for you
  • Point 4A: The power players, UK and US, became tightly linked together
  • Point 4B: If war does come, it is possible to deny the use of the system to enemies
    • Make other countries dependant on the continuation of the global economy
    • Would lose access to a great deal if they went to war
    • British picked off the best colonies while Austria/Prussia fighting over Silesia
    • In a war, requirements for goods go up, so freezing enemies out from their valued materials supply becomes a weapon
      • Germany and Japan were frozen out of the system in the 1930s
      • Anglophones maintained sources of prosperity that helped to pay for needed materials
    • Over and over rivals to UK and US have only become poorer by resisting
      • Currency withers
      • Becomes hard to support the needs of the people
  • Summary of Key Point 4:
    • 4A: Invite others into the system
    • 4B: During wars, cut off those who are not in the system
  • So when we see China going to make deals with Venezuela, it means the system is working
    • China is making strategic bets
    • In a crisis US could deny China the use of the Panama Canal which would be a major problem for them
    • Idea is that China is then that much more entangled in the web
  • Bottom line: Need to build a complex set of dependencies
    • Will have less reason to challenge the system and system leaders
    • Otherwise the troublemaker will suffer economically

**Key Point #5: Promote liberal values, institutions, and organizations**
• Reasons to do this
  • We don’t tend to worry about fat/happy countries – worry about the poor, failing ones
  • No one talks about China getting too rich
  • More to fear from those not getting rich
• Going back to Key Point #2 about taking the show on the road
  • Want to avoid writing contracts with countries that are based on corruption, without a legal system, etc.
  • Situations are better if
    • The military is not tied too tightly to the aristocracy
    • Points of view are well represented throughout the society
  • We generally want the countries that we deal with to work better, not worse
• Promoting liberal institutions helps this along – does not just mean democracy
  • The whole package must work together to develop the society

It is possible to sum up 400 years of history in ten letters: UP to UK to US since they have developed and run the power structure of history
This Power Structure brings other things with it

- It does not make for a quiet life
  - An open society is a capitalist society
- Always leads to changes in technologies and the society
  - When the Great Powers of old (Rome, Egypt) got control of everything they wanted, then they did not want any more change
  - UP/UK/US have a double view of the situation
    - They do not really like changes in such things as borders
    - But they also have a permanent revolution with things always changing
      - China has changed from rice growing to tech development in 50 years
      - China’s changes were helped by US efforts
    - Always lighting fires and then needing to put them out
  - Change is a natural consequence of the system and it is not going to stop

- Some changes complicate the situation
  - Development of technologies has allowed WMD to spread even to terrorists
  - For foreseeable future this will continue
  - US cannot sit on its laurels; must keep adjusting to incorporate responses to new problems

The order we seek may make us less secure

- Rapid development makes many things in society change
  - Look at all the changes in American society in race/gender relations in only a few years
  - Changes have occurred in what is considered normal or acceptable
- Such changes are a product of a society that is built on the concept of profit as a motivating force
  - We may not always be happy with these changes
- On the whole the US is good at handling change
  - Many others do not accept change and are held back because of that
  - The internet may allow some new technologies to be available even in Afghanistan but the society would not be ready to accept them
  - This instability from change which we handle well at home gets exported overseas where it is not so well handled thereby causing problems

Over the centuries many peoples have tried to resist this UP/UK/US system but only to their detriment

- Example: In 1856 as the Brits were winning against the indigenous people of South Africa
  - A young girl herding cattle had a vision that if her people killed all their cattle and burned everything the gods would make the British leave
  - She convinced the leaders about the this concept
  - They killed 300,000 cattle and burned their crops
    - The British did not leave
o One-third of the indigenous people starved

- As in the example cultures under threat do not think that their old ways were wrong
  - They do not question their old ways
  - They believe that instead they must show more faith to the old ways
    - Happened in the Boxer Rebellion – believed special shirts would protect them
    - In the 1890s *Ghost Dancers* among American Indians thought they had protective shirts, too
    - Such beliefs happened many other times and in many other places
  - *Ghost Dancers* of today can be identified within Islamic cultures
    - They will not rethink their ways and will not change
    - Instead they believe that they must live up to their old ways as they define them more assiduously
    - Somehow that will drive away the invader
  - In the South Africa example the problem was that no one in London cared about the 300,000 cattle
  - Today’s ghost dancers have more options as terrorists
    - They will not be going away
    - As the US footprint gets bigger throughout the world, so does the chance for instability
  - Bottomline: After al Qaeda there will be some other group to deal with
    - It won’t be the end
    - Over the last 400 years there have always been enemies and there always will be

**QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

What are some of the methods to handle the instability problems?

- In the old days the British only had gunboats to handle their problems
  - Now have institutions like the IMF and the World Bank
- Need a mix of carrots and sticks
- Countries that become stable have either a democracy or a responsible dictator who understands the system
- As a country becomes more prosperous, then there are more people who have ideas about how things should be run
  - Elites need to learn new ways to manage problems
- Won’t necessarily happen smoothly; no cookie cutter solutions
- Specialists are always trying to think up new ways to handle these situations

**Environmental issues**

- Things are not all bad with development
  - New York and London are cleaner now than they were 100 years ago
  - China already sees the need to clean up its environment
- Capitalism does not necessarily lead to a resource crash
• Resource limitations do not put upper limits on development – needs change
  ▪ Farmers in a village hut worry about growing enough lentils to pay the tax man and keep themselves alive
  ▪ In a modern city restaurant food costs would be minimal
    • Restaurants are more about the atmosphere, skill of the chef, etc
    • In terms of GDP food in a restaurant is 100 times more valuable than growing lentils outside a village hut
  ▪ As a society develops it actually uses less raw materials
    • US society today is less about oil/raw materials and more about services
    • Can expect to move even further toward using less material for daily life
    • This is especially true since the overall population is dropping in some places and will likely flatten out

What caused the shifts from the Dutch to the British and then to the US?

• Around 1700 the Dutch were battling France fiercely that they needed help from the British
  ▪ While helping, the British could basically pick the Dutch pockets
  ▪ The British were in a better geo-political position – the English Channel protected them
• During World War II, President Roosevelt (whose ancestors settled in New Amsterdam) took the opportunity to pick the pockets of the British
  ▪ They were in an existential battle for survival against the Nazis
• For a country to take over from the US, it would need to be as good or better than the US in the great power system
  ▪ US would also need to be in an existential battle for survival
  ▪ Who would be that enemy? Canada?
• More likely that if the US went down then the whole system would fail
  ▪ That is a bigger concept needing a different type of analysis
• No other country is currently capable of replacing the US for the foreseeable future

Could Iraq bring the US down?

Iraq on the scale of world history is insignificant
• The US defense budget is currently a smaller percentage of the GDP than in the Cold War
  ▪ As bad as the deaths in Iraq are, they are not on the scale of the Korean or Vietnam wars
• US would have to be in a grand existential battle to lose its position
  ▪ Iraq does not count
  ▪ By comparison, UK was spending up to 2/3 of its GDP on World War II

Could China step in and take over for the US?
China is being sucked into the web of global dependencies
- If China is to make cars or socks for the world it would need the world’s tin and cotton
- In Brazil many people were happy to see the Chinese come in to replace major US investments
  - Then they discovered that the Chinese acted the same ways as the US had done
  - China does not love them any more than the US did
  - China wants to buy raw materials as cheaply as it can, like the US did
- The way ahead in China looks to be toward development within the global system, not toward overthrowing it

Doesn’t the grand strategy promote violence?

The Grand Strategy is not a recipe for a trouble-free life; it is a recipe for winning
- Iran and similar countries must find ways to join in the system
  - Iran may have a value system that makes their choices irrational to us
  - Others in the past had the same problem: Soviets, Nazis, etc
  - They will discover if they are not part of the system they will face an enormous cost
- North Korea can only produce missiles and nuclear weapons and cannot really sell them at prices that would sustain their economy
  - Their only hope is to have outside interests set up factories there
- The global system does not mean that everyone will go along exactly the same way
  - Does mean that those not willing to participate in the system will be very expensive for them

If the US is an open society, why does it take so long to become a citizen?

When we say that the US is an open society, it does not mean that it is a perfect society
- There is really a spectrum of open to closed societies
- No country is at 100%
- Immigration is one of the good points for the US
  - The UK and the NL also had good assimilation of immigrants
- The length of time it takes to become a citizen is more of a problem for individuals

What would concern the US with relation to China?

The US would object to China trying to establish a hegemony in Asia
- Hegemony would be what Japan did in the 1930s in that region
- China invading her neighbors is a scenario that would cause the US to respond
- However, the way all of Asia is developing into a huge multi-polar entity, it would be hard for anyone power to dominate
- Some believe that if there is going to be one nuclear power in Asia that there really should be two for balance (India and China)
• Let Asia be Asia without the US hovering over them

Core view – looking over 400 years, no sign that one group of people is more clever than others

- It took the US 60 years to:
  - First, care about the decline of the British
  - Then, do something about it
- If the US had understood in 1905 that the British empire was already crumbling in the Balance of Power arena:
  - Then the US could have responded with the appropriate response
  - Then maybe could have avoided World I and II
  - Then would not have had Communists, Nazis, etc.
- Even when the US has been at its stupidest and brought on catastrophes, it still does better than other countries
- Domestic issues like elections can make things better or worse in daily life, but the overall system is too deeply entrenched to be over turned

What is the relationship between the War in Iraq and the Great Power System?

- Going back to 1688, the British really lost only one Great Power war – the American Revolution
- In the meantime there were many smaller wars and battles that the British and then the US lost
- In major global order resetting wars the UK or the US will win
- The Great Power system gives no guarantees about how the US will do in Iraq
- Must look at the role of the Mid East in US grand strategy
  - Oil and Israel are two frequently misunderstood topics that are also very emotional
    - General view in the world is that the US goes around the world like Dracula sucking up all the oil like blood from virgins
    - Some countries do behave that way, the US really does not
  - In fact the Mid East is not all that important to the US oil supply
    - Energy growth more in Africa
    - Most energy still comes from North America
  - So why do we care about the Mid East and its oil?
    - Back to Point #4 – making a stable society worldwide
      - If go back to a zero-sum game over oil in some parts of the world, then the world would be forced back into great power wars
        - Japan decides to build ships to protect its oil supply
        - China or Europe sees each one as a blow against it – equivalent of loosing
      - Without the US in the Mid East, we could have Great Power conflicts with even more economic issues
    - The basic US philosophy is economic
Japan can go ahead and buy all the oil it needs and feel secure that it will get to Tokyo

US tries to make sure no one power dominates – not Soviets, not a single unified Arab group
  • This is fundamentally why the US went into the first Gulf War

Relationships in the Arab world during the Cold War required that a country which wanted to be friends with the US had to be:
  1. Anti-Soviet
  2. Early in the period willing to throw the British and/or French colonialists out
  3. Willing to help prevent the rise of a single Arab national system that would monopolize power

To meet these points the US allied with Nasser to drive out the British and French from Suez

Then allied with Turkey, Iran, and Israel against the Arabs to keep them from uniting
  • When the Shah fell in Iran, things got out of balance

In Asia, the US has a fairly stable situation, but the Mid East, it is volatile
  • Now it looks like the dream of a single Sunni Arab power is not very likely

US needs to solidify the new situation in the Mid East
  • Must restart the peace process with Israel
  • Not that the peace process will necessarily succeed

The Iraq war is no longer about the beautiful future for Iraq, so US needs to ensure 3 things:
  1. That Al Qaeda and related groups are not seen as the winners having driven out the Americans
  2. That Iran does not wind up in control of or with a good deal of dominance in Iraq
  3. That the instability in Iraq does not draw others in from the outside where they can be radicalized

There is a little hope that things might actually be looking up and working out in Iraq
  • Having better relations with the tribal leaders who have grown tired of Al Qaeda is a hopeful sign that, with luck, might expand toward stability
  • If some stability develops, then Iraq can get by with less US military support in the country, then need to look at significant opportunities in the region
    • Get a peace process going with Israel
    • Stabilize all of the Sunnis
    • Work on Iran as a separate issue

Too many people in DC were too optimistic about going into Iraq
  • Now only hear too much pessimistic talk
  • There is a general belief that the US made a major mistake and that it must pay for it at some horrendous cost – but this is not necessarily true